



IPSWICH

CULTURE & HERITAGE STRATEGY 2026-36

THEORY OF CHANGE



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



3. A THEORY OF CHANGE (TOC)

A Theory of Change sets out the strategic logic underpinning this strategy and aims to build a shared understanding of the conditions required to deliver long-term systemic change.

It identifies the relationship between the town's current opportunities & challenges, the evidence emerging through consultation and research, the strategic responses required, and the long-term social, cultural and economic outcomes the strategy seeks to effect.

The ToC should be understood as the “north star” for the strategy and any future delivery structures responsible for implementing it. Whilst specific programmes, partnerships and funding

mechanisms may evolve over time, the Theory of Change establishes the core assumptions, intended direction of travel and evaluation logic that will guide decision-making across the ten-year period.

THE TOC IS ROOTED IN BOTH QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE EVIDENCE. THIS INCLUDES:

- socio-economic and demographic data
- cultural participation and investment data
- health and wellbeing indicators
- consultation findings from residents, freelancers, organisations and stakeholders



The Strategic Ambitions outlined in Section 4 emerge directly from this evidence base and should be understood as the delivery framework through which the Theory of Change is realised.

Aligned with a Theory of Change methodology, each Strategic Ambition is structured across three developmental phases over the lifetime of the strategy.

- **Funded R&D: Designing Inputs & Delivering Short-Term Outputs**

- **Discovery: Delivering Medium-Term Outcomes**

- **Progression: Delivering Long-Term Outcomes**

Rather than fixed periods of time, these phases are stages of maturity which will be evidenced through evaluation and longitudinal learning.





“...focuses on deepening understanding, strengthening partnerships, testing approaches and designing the infrastructure required for long-term success.”



FUNDED R&D:

This phase focuses on deepening understanding, strengthening partnerships, testing approaches and designing the infrastructure required for long-term success. It recognises that some strategic challenges identified through the consultation require further experimentation, relationship-building and evidence gathering before sustainable delivery models can emerge.

DISCOVERY:

This phase sees programmes and partnerships becoming more established, delivery becoming more coordinated and evaluation data beginning to demonstrate measurable progress against strategic ambitions. During this stage, funding models, governance structures and delivery mechanisms become more stable and visible.

PROGRESSION:

This phase represents the point at which strategic ambitions are embedded within the civic, cultural and economic life of Ipswich. Longitudinal evidence and evaluation data demonstrate sustained impact, enabling increased confidence, investment and future ambition beyond the lifetime of the strategy itself.



PRINCES STREET

AN IMPORTANT NOTE ON THEORY OF CHANGE

The Theory of Change presented within this strategy operates primarily at a systems level. It establishes the long-term conditions for change, the strategic outcomes sought and the evidence informing those ambitions. It is not intended at this stage to prescribe detailed programmes, staffing structures or operational activity across every ambition.

Instead, the early R&D phase attached to each Strategic Ambition will support the development of linked operational Theories of Change for specific programmes, partnerships and interventions.

THE PROCESS WILL ESTABLISH:

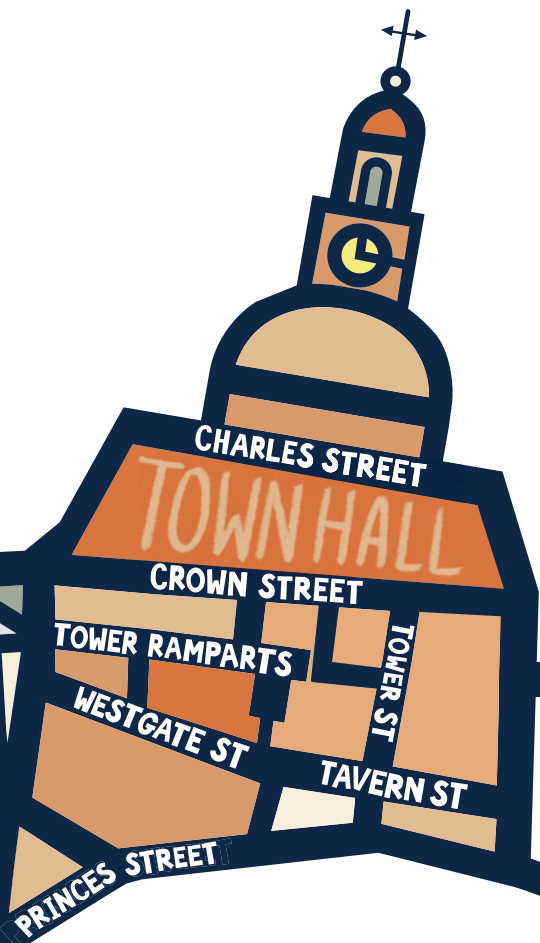
- baseline data and benchmarking
- delivery partnerships and governance
- resource and funding requirements
- detailed activities and outputs
- evaluation methodologies
- and measurable indicators linked to short, medium and long-term outcomes

This recognises that some of the challenges identified through consultation require further testing, co-design and evidence gathering before sustainable delivery models can emerge.

SYSTEMS LEVEL THEORY OF CHANGE

As already noted, the ambition of this strategy directly draws on a strong evidence base including an open access online survey, baseline demographic and participation data, funding and investment data, existing strategic priorities across stakeholders, and conversations and listening activities with communities, cultural organisations, partners, funders and creative freelancers.

Together, this evidence base has enabled the design of a systems level theory of change for Ipswich.



CURRENT CHALLENGE 1

Socio-economic inequality and rising cost-of-living pressures are limiting access to opportunity, participation and wellbeing

EMERGING EVIDENCE

Higher deprivation levels than regional and national comparators, higher child poverty, lower household income after housing costs, increased cost-of-living vulnerability

LONG-TERM CHANGE SOUGHT

Culture and heritage become visible contributors to quality of life, affordability, wellbeing and opportunity across all communities

STRATEGIC RESPONSE

Neighbourhood-based cultural infrastructure, free and low-cost participation models, embedded community partnerships and targeted investment approaches

CURRENT CHALLENGE 2

Lower educational attainment and a lack of progression pathways are limiting aspiration, retention and access to creative careers

EMERGING EVIDENCE

Higher proportion of residents with no qualifications, lower higher education participation, consultation identified low visibility of creative pathways and talent retention concerns

LONG-TERM CHANGE SOUGHT

More young people able to access, shape and sustain creative futures within Ipswich

STRATEGIC RESPONSE

Joined-up youth pathways, creative skills development, progression routes, apprenticeships, talent retention and embedded youth leadership

CURRENT CHALLENGE 3

High levels of loneliness, anxiety and limited social connection contributing to fragmented communities and low belonging across generations

EMERGING EVIDENCE

Loneliness and anxiety indicators above national comparators, lower levels of neighbourhood belonging and civic participation, consultation identified disconnected communities despite strong grassroots activity

LONG-TERM CHANGE SOUGHT

Stronger social connection, community cohesion and locally-rooted cultural leadership

STRATEGIC RESPONSE

Community-led cultural networks, trusted local connectors, participatory programming and hyper-local cultural activity

CURRENT CHALLENGE 4

Creative and cultural assets are not yet fully connected into wider economic growth, regeneration and placemaking

EMERGING EVIDENCE

Underused meanwhile spaces and heritage assets identified through consultation, low visibility of culture in the public realm, comparatively low creative business density and creative employment

LONG-TERM CHANGE SOUGHT

Culture and heritage embedded within regeneration, economic development and civic planning

STRATEGIC RESPONSE

Creative placemaking, meanwhile activation, public realm commissioning, heritage activation and stronger cross-sector planning partnerships

CURRENT CHALLENGE 5

Ipswich has cultural infrastructure and investment, but lacks a consistently confident internal and external narrative about itself

EMERGING EVIDENCE

Recurring consultation themes around negative perceptions of Ipswich despite strong cultural infrastructure and participation, fragmented external identity, limited visibility of success stories

LONG-TERM CHANGE SOUGHT

A more confident, ambitious and connected civic identity for Ipswich

STRATEGIC RESPONSE

Coordinated storytelling, civic cultural leadership, collaborative place narrative and stronger cultural ecology partnerships

CURRENT CHALLENGE 6

The creative and cultural economy is less developed relative to comparator places and lacks visible freelance infrastructure

EMERGING EVIDENCE

Lower levels of creative businesses, creative employment and creative GVA than Cambridge and Norwich, freelancers identified fragility, isolation and lack of infrastructure through consultation

LONG-TERM CHANGE SOUGHT

A stronger, more resilient and visible creative ecology capable of supporting long-term economic and cultural growth

STRATEGIC RESPONSE

Freelance support infrastructure, sector development, networks, affordable workspace, commissioning opportunities and business support pathways

ST. MATTHEW'S ST

NEW

WOLSEY

CIVIC DRIVE

The strategy establishes a framework of research, discovery and progression through which Ipswich can coordinate long-term learning, investment, partnership and delivery over the next decade.

Each strategic area requires deeper evidence gathering and participation before designing and delivering programme activity. This comprehensive research programme needs to explore key thematic emerging from consultations including:

- Defining best practice freelance and creative workforce conditions
- Understanding the current and potential retention rates of creative talent
- Future proofing and designing sustainable creative career pathways
- Exploring the barriers to cultural participation in hyper local contexts
- Understanding the perceptions of Ipswich among young people currently *not* connected to known programmes
- Gathering evidence on the relationship between culture, loneliness and community wellbeing
- Partnering with, adding value, and connecting to existing activity that is already addressing these themes

Each **Strategic Ambition** is set out below with a proposed strategic intent, the context, existing and required evidence base, long term outcomes and existing delivery mechanisms that could be used for future programmes.